

SAN FRANCISCO — A black Oakland police officer who claims he was run down and beaten by fellow officers who mistook him for a suspect during a drug raid last year filed a \$1.5 million lawsuit against the officers yesterday.

Derrick D. Norfleet, whose claim against the city was rejected, is also suing the city, city manager and police chief in U.S. District Court.

According to the suit, Norfleet was working undercover July 11

when the three officers chased him away from a 96th Avenue home where the raid was taking place.

Norfleet's suit says he thought the other officers, two of them white and the other Asian American, were simulating his arrest to conceal his identity as an undercover officer.

But instead, they rammed him with their patrol car and punched, kicked and beat him with a flashlight, the suit says.

They ceased the attack only when he showed his face to the

officers, according to the suit. Also named in the suit were Police Chief George Hart and City Manager Henry Gardner, accused of being indifferent to "repeated" brutality of the three officers against black citizens.

None of the officers was suspended after the incident. One of them, Michael Cefalu has resigned.

Norfleet, who joined the Oakland force two years ago, was on disability leave from his job for a month after the attack.

He remains with the force, but is not working undercover.

Officer, motorist in good condition after collision

FR JUL 18 1986

The Tribune

An Oakland police officer and the driver of a vehicle who were involved in a collision Wednesday night both remained hospitalized yesterday.

Officer Michael Cefalu, 22, was reported in good condition at a local hospital with head and neck injuries.

Michael Porter, 25, of Oakland, the driver of the other car, was reported in good condition at Providence Hospital with head and leg injuries.

Two other occupants of Porter's car, Danny Raffa, 21, of Emeryville and Albert LaRanaga, 19, of Oakland, were treated and released.

Police said Cefalu was driving west on 27th Street at about 10:55 p.m. Wednesday en route to a call of a mentally ill person creating a disturbance on Adeline Street.

Police said Cefalu did not have his siren or warning lights on when he went through a flashing red light at Martin Luther King Jr. Way and collided with Porter's northbound Chevrolet.

THU MAY 8 1 1992 Berkeley police case inconsistencies

By Tribune staff

Berkeley police said Ronald Griffin's story of police brutality steadily unraveled as they gathered physical evidence and contacted witnesses in the case.

■ Griffin's family had said a friend called from a store phone booth in the early morning hours of May 10 and said she saw Griffin being arrested by police.

But phone records showed no calls from the booth to the Griffin household at that time. The family friend later admitted that someone told her to say she saw the arrests. Police would not identify that person, saying the investigation continues.

■ Griffin said he was handcuffed by police who beat him with their batons.

But Griffin's "facial cuts appeared to have been made with something other than a baton" and there were no bruises indicating he tried to duck the blows, Chief Dash Butler said in a prepared statement.

"There were no bruises or cuts on his wrists from the handcuffs," Butler said.

The blood patterns on Griffin's clothes also indicated "he was sitting when injured, not standing or lying down as he claimed."

■ Griffin said he was beaten by four officers — Michael Cefalu and three others who wore drug task force uniforms.

But an exhaustive review of computerized police dispatch records showed at least one of the four accused officers was busy elsewhere in the city at the time Griffin said he was beaten.

"There is no period where the four accused officers cannot be accounted for ... in another location, many of which are a substantial distance away" from the alleged beating site, Butler said.

■ Griffin said the beating occurred near 67th Street and San Pablo Avenue.

But an examination of that area "did not turn up any blood or other physical evidence to support his claims," Butler said. "Any facial wound, particularly as serious as Mr. Griffin's, would bleed profusely."

Berkeley probes alleged beating of black by cops

TUE MAY 12 1992

By William Brand
Tribune staff writer

BERKELEY — The City of Berkeley is investigating allegations that four white Berkeley police officers severely beat an African American Richmond resident here early Sunday.

The victim, Ronald Griffin, 25, was listed in fair condition in Brookside Hospital last night, following more than seven hours of oral surgery for broken upper and lower jaws and missing and damaged teeth, the hospital said.

Berkeley police spokesman Lt. Tom Grant said one officer, identified by the Richmond resident as the one primarily responsible for the incident, has been placed on administrative leave until criminal and administrative investigations are complete.

Griffin's sister, Linda Griffin of Berkeley, said her brother told her he was handcuffed, struck on the face by one officer using a baton, then beaten into unconsciousness at an isolated spot behind the East Bay Skills Center on San Pablo Avenue near Ashby Avenue.

She said he told her the incident began when he was walking early Sunday morning on 63rd Street between Sacramento and California streets. Two white male officers allegedly pulled up to him, asked him to identify himself, then drove away.

Two squad cars came back moments later with two additional officers and he was handcuffed, put in one of the cars and driven to the site of the beating, she said.

When he regained consciousness, the officers were gone, she said Griffin told her. He then walked in a daze to San Pablo, where a friend saw him and took him to his wife in Richmond. They then took him to the Brookside emergency room.

San Pablo police interviewed him there and called Berkeley police, Linda Griffin said.

Mayor Loni Hancock yesterday promised a quick and complete investigation of the charges. She said the FBI and

the Alameda County District Attorney's Office are assisting the investigation, at the city police department's request.

"If they are true, those officers are going to be off the police force and they will be prosecuted in criminal court to the fullest extent of the law," she said. "There is no place for conduct like that in Berkeley."

If the charges are untrue, the officers will be exonerated, she said.

Lt. Grant would not identify any of the officers, but sources outside Berkeley police identified the officer placed on leave as Michael Cefalu. Another source confirmed that Cefalu had arrested Griffin on suspicion of possession of drugs in late March.

Griffin's sister, Linda, said the drug charges against her brother were dropped, but because he had been arrested, he served 30 days in San Quentin for parole violation.

Griffin had been released from state prison on Feb. 21, after serving four years for attempted murder and robbery, his sister said.

Cefalu, 28, has been on the Berkeley police force for about a year. Previously, he was an Oakland police officer for several years.

He resigned from the Oakland police in 1989 after Cefalu and two other Oakland officers were sued by a fellow officer, Derrick D. Norfleet, for beating him because they mistakenly thought he was a drug dealer.

Norfleet, who is black and was operating undercover at the time, subsequently collected a \$60,000 judgment from the city of Oakland. One of the attorneys who represented Norfleet, John Burris, now represents Griffin, Linda Griffin said.

Linda Griffin, who is acting as spokeswoman for the family, said her brother knew two of the officers, including one officer her brother referred to as "Officer Soup, like Campbell's Soup."

"Soup is the one who has been placed on leave," she said.

Oakland cop files claim over assault by colleagues

TUE DEC 6, 1988

By Jack Cheevers
The Tribune

A black Oakland police officer, charging he was run over and beaten by three other officers after he made an undercover drug buy, has filed a \$1.5 million claim against the city.

Officer Derrick Norfleet, 25, also alleged he was assaulted "solely (because of) his race" as police conducted an East Oakland drug raid on the night of July 22.

City Attorney Jayne Williams said she hadn't seen the claim and couldn't comment on it. Such claims, which are legal prerequisites to filing a lawsuit, are routinely rejected.

Norfleet's claim said he had already made one undercover buy at a MacArthur Boulevard motel that evening when he was assigned to make a second purchase at a house at 2032 96th Ave. in East Oakland.

Clad in plain clothes, Norfleet entered the house while two teams of narcotics officers waited outside to arrest the dealers, his claim said.

After making the buy, Norfleet walked back outside and signaled his partner, who radioed the waiting officers to begin their arrests.

Norfleet then jogged up 96th Avenue and across Sunnyside Street to Carter Park, where he heard the squeal of tires and realized one of the arrest teams was pursuing him.

According to his claim, the car jumped the curb and chased Norfleet into the park. Believing the officers planned to fake an arrest of him to protect his undercover identity, he stopped and put his hands in the air.

Instead, Norfleet said, the car rammed him. The officers then began kicking and punching him and hitting him with a flashlight.

When they finally recognized him, Norfleet said, the trio stopped beating him, saying,

"If this is a cop they did this to, my God, what are they doing to other people?"

— Attorney John Burris

"We didn't know it was you."

Those who conducted the beating were identified in the claim as officers Mike Cefalou, Tim Chun and Bernard Thurman.

Norfleet suffered "injury and trauma" to his head, back, legs and ankles, his claim said, along with "overwhelming traumatic stress associated with a fear of being savagely beaten (and) profound anxiety."

John Burris, Norfleet's attorney, said the car was moving at 5 to 15 mph when it struck Norfleet.

Burris said the officer was not hospitalized but was later placed on disability leave for less than a month. He has since returned to duty, the lawyer said.

Police Chief George Hart said the incident was investigated by the police internal affairs unit, but he declined to say if any disciplinary action was taken against any officers.

Burris said the incident was "certainly a mistake" but that Norfleet was attacked only because he is black.

"I don't think it was a police officer they thought they were running over," he said. "But they ran over a black person the thought was involved in narcotics."

"Even if he (Norfleet) was a dope dealer, he still hadn't done anything that would justify assault. If this is a cop they did this to, my God, what are they doing to other people?"

Berkeley officers defended

By William Brand
and Daniel Vasquez
Tribune staff writers

The attorney for four Berkeley police officers accused of beating a black Richmond man said yesterday that police department dispatch records and other evidence show they were elsewhere at the time.

Ronald Griffin, 25, alleges he was beaten by the officers early Sunday. Last night, a march to protest the alleged brutality drew about 100 people, mostly black youths, to the city's Police Review Commission meeting.

San Francisco attorney Michael Rains contends dispatch records show that two of the officers were engaged in a lengthy car stop during the time Griffin allegedly was brutalized.

The third officer, Mike Cefalu also made a car stop at that time, Rains said. Cefalu has been identified by Griffin as being primarily responsible for the incident.

"The fourth officer was in fact writing police reports at the station from 10 p.m. to 2

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a.m. There are witnesses and other evidence to support that," Rains said.

Griffin was discharged yesterday from Brookside Hospital in San Pablo, where he was hospitalized about 2 a.m. Sunday with broken upper and lower jaws, missing and displaced teeth and other injuries. Griffin underwent surgery on his jaw on Monday.

Minutes before the Police Review Commission meeting last night, a crowd of chanting protesters approached the Berkeley Senior Center and blocked the Ellis Street building entrance temporarily while shouting "We want justice."

The crowd had gathered earlier at San Pablo Park, where people spoke about the alleged beating of Griffin.

"I'm here today to support my brother," said 20-year-old Teresa, his youngest sister. "Somebody has to."

Griffin's family said he had complained about being harassed by Berkeley police since he was 14. The family had tried to remain unnoticed, but was drawn into speaking.

"The Berkeley police are a different breed nowadays. I've lived in Berkeley for 40 years and the police are different now. They are mean, ornery and they

don't give a damn about blacks," said Edna Williams, whose daughter is married to Griffin's brother.

The Police Review Commission said it has been investigating Cefalu since he was hired by the Berkeley department after resigning from the Oakland police force in 1989. Cefalu and two other police officers had been sued by a fellow Oakland officer for beating him because they had mistakenly thought he was a drug dealer. The Berkeley commission wants to know why he was hired.

Last night the commission voted to ask the police department if Cefalu is or ever has been on probation and also to release the names of the other officers allegedly involved in the Griffin beating.

Cefalu, 28, has been placed on administrative leave pending an investigation of Griffin's allegations by the city, which is being assisted by the Alameda County District Attorney's office. The FBI is conducting its own investigation.

Berkeley police have not released information on any of the four officers' movements during the period between 10 p.m. this past Saturday night and 2 a.m. Sunday.

But Berkeley police spokes-

man Lt. Tom Grant said a new computer-assisted dispatch system recorded 98 calls for assistance during those hours. The 18 officers on patrol handled all of the calls.

"It was a very busy night," he said.

Griffin's accusation drew attention at Tuesday night's city council meeting.

There, protesters shouted down Mayor Loni Hancock at one point.

Hancock, backed by the entire Berkeley City Council, said the city is treating the allegations "absolutely seriously."

"If there is any truth to these charges, the city is determined to press criminal charges against those officers," Hancock said over shouts and hoots from several angry spectators, who later charged that civil rights abuses and police brutality occur frequently in the city. Their complaints, they said, are routinely ignored.

Griffin had been released from state prison Feb. 21, after serving four years for attempted murder and robbery, his sister, Linda, said. Sources said Cefalu had arrested him on suspicion of drug possession in March. The charges were dropped but because Griffin had been arrested, he served 30 days in prison for parole violation, his sister said.

Police seeking scam victim

By William Brand
STAFF WRITER

BERKELEY — Police put out an unusual bulletin Tuesday: They're looking for a victim. The suspects are already in jail.

The victim is an Hispanic man, 50 to 60 years old, who was on University Avenue on Monday afternoon. An off-duty Berkeley cop probably saved him a lot of cash.

The two men in jail, both from Richmond, are suspects in a complicated money-switching fraud case. They landed in jail after a chase up University by off-duty officer Michael Cefala.

"Unfortunately, the victim walked off while Officer Cefala and our other guys were collaring the suspects," said Lt. Michel de Latour, Berkeley police spokesman. "We can't hold these guys unless the victim turns up, so we really need help finding him."

De Latour said that Cefala saw the two men in conversation with the apparent victim, who was wearing a white T-shirt and tan pants. Cefala has worked as a detective in the fraud division and recognized the two men in connection with old cases. He parked his motorcycle and edged close to the group.

"The way these deals go down, the guys who run the fraud find someone with money, show him a fake letter, usually from South Africa or some remote place, that states they are the recipient of a large amount of money. They win the victim's

Please see Victim, A-10

Contact police

suspects, but they drove off. Berkeley Police Capt. Phil Doran, who was passing by, and a uniformed officer joined Cefalu to stop the pair.

"They found the scam letter, fake rolls of U.S. currency and a black bandanna to wrap it in," de Latour said. He said it appears Cefalu interrupted the switch.

"We would like the victim to call our fraud division. The call is confidential, but we need the call to charge these guys," he said.

The number is 644-6770.

Ratings were based on vote. dealing with air pollution on vote. received a 63, down from 90 in 1992. Term Bill Lockyer, D-Hayward, re- and Senate President Pr confidence and conviction withdraw a large sum of money, then they give him their money to hold along with his own money," de Latour said.

But the con artists' money usually is nothing but paper. The bundles get switched and the victim winds up with the bag full of paper, de Latour said.

The group broke up and the victim walked away. Cefalu, who was not in uniform, tried to stop the

Police say ^{KEFAM, MIKE} Richmond man made up beating story

WED MAY 20 1952

By William Brand
Tribune staff writer

BERKELEY — Police here say they now have solid evidence that the Richmond black man who claimed he was beaten 10 days ago by four white Berkeley cops made up the entire episode to cover his involvement in a three-city crime spree, the Oakland Tribune has learned.

Police would not comment further, but non-police sources close to the investigation said Ronald Lee Griffin's story began to unravel with the arrest Monday night of an associate, Thomas Samuel Wallace, on a warrant charging him with two armed robberies in Berkeley on the night of May 9.

Sources said police believe Griffin attempted to rob a drug dealer and had

his jaw broken when his victim hit him with a gun butt.

Wallace, 28, of Oakland remained in custody last night at Berkeley City Jail and was talking to officers about the Saturday night rampage, sources confirmed.

Sources said evidence positively linking Griffin to the beating in another city was found late Monday in a stolen

car towed away from a West Oakland service station May 11.

Griffin, 25, had not been charged or arrested last night, but he has been questioned several times and is sticking to his allegations of a police beating, sources said. Griffin could not be reached last night for comment.

Attorney Mike Rains, who represents the four Berkeley patrol officers,

has insisted from the beginning that they did not beat Griffin.

"The fact that authorities know Mr. Griffin is involved in robberies certainly vindicates the officers of any wrongdoing," Rains said last night.

Rains reiterated his vow that a lawsuit will be filed against Griffin and his

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attorneys, saying they "can't just expect to walk away" after making the original allegations.

Berkeley Police Chief Dash Butler has scheduled a press conference for 3 p.m. today to present results of the non-stop investigation into Griffin's allegations. Representatives of the FBI and the NAACP will be present as well as will Berkeley investigators and representatives of the Berkeley Police Association, Butler said.

Family members said Wallace brought Griffin to Brookside Hospital in San Pablo about 2 a.m. May 10. Griffin told San Pablo police that four white Berkeley officers picked him up, took him to an isolated spot and beat him. In an interview with Berkeley police detectives later in the day, Griffin identified Officer Mike Cefalu and another officer.

The allegations — just days after a Southern California jury exonerated four Los Angeles police officers for the beating of Rodney King — touched off a furor in the Bay Area. Protesters marched in Berkeley demanding that Cefalu be fired.

Cefalu had resigned from the Oakland police force after he and two other officers were named in a civil rights suit filed by another Oakland police officer. The officer charged them with beating him when he was working undercover and masquerading as a drug dealer.

Cefalu, who has been on administrative leave, has been strongly supported throughout the investigation by Butler and the rest of the department.

Fellow officers suspected the beating allegations may have been retaliation for Cefalu's arrest of Griffin on a drug charge in late March. The drug charge was later dropped, but the arrest resulted in a parole violation that sent Griffin back to prison for 30 days.

As many as 40 of Berkeley's more than 160 sworn officers have been working on the case, Berkeley police Lt. Tom Grant said.

Grant would not confirm details that police have discovered. "Let's just say that people around here have been working real hard and we've discovered

that the allegations are in fact absolutely false," Grant said.

A narrative pieced together from non-police sources indicated that Wallace and Griffin may have stolen a Mazda in Richmond or Berkeley on May 9 and then drove to the 800 block of Ensenada Avenue, a quiet neighborhood in the Berkeley Hills. A pedestrian was robbed at gunpoint on Ensenada.

Then around midnight that night, a man entering his car on Camelia Street in West Berkeley was robbed at gunpoint and the robbers drove off in the car.

Wallace was booked for those robberies, sources said.

After another robbery attempt, where the drug dealer allegedly attacked Griffin, the second stolen car was abandoned at the West Oakland service station, sources said.

Wallace then drove Griffin to Brookside Hospital where he made his cop-beating allegations.

Yesterday, attorney Rains said Griffin's lawyers should have been "more responsible in their investigation before making allegations to the media. Had they acted responsibly it would not have put the entire (Berkeley) department through the infamy it was put through last week."

Rains said that although a burden has been lifted from the officers' shoulders, they still have been "irreparably damaged from the assertions."

He added it would be difficult to "overcome the scars opened up in the department over this."

Both Griffin and Wallace have extensive criminal records for drug dealing, auto theft and acts of violence, and have spent time in state prison, according to documents filed in Alameda County Superior Court.

They apparently both "ran with" a group of drug dealers and thieves who operated in West Berkeley, according to sources and court records.

Wallace, whose nickname is "Chill," has a juvenile arrest record dating to when he was 13 years old, according to court records.

As an adult he has been arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, possession of cocaine for sale, burglary, petty theft, drunken driving, car burglary

and auto theft, the records show.

In one case in 1987, Wallace was arrested on a drug charge in West Berkeley when police busted a rock cocaine ring working out of an apartment house on 10th Street, according to the records.

In 1984 he was arrested by Oakland police after he allegedly threatened to kill a woman and then hit her husband in the face with an Uzi, according to court records.

When Wallace was arrested, police searched his car and found a semiautomatic rifle, an M-2 carbine, a Luger pistol and a semiautomatic Colt pistol, the records state.

Wallace has been convicted of possession of cocaine, burglary and receipt of stolen property and has had his probation revoked on other occasions because of more offenses.

Griffin, who grew up in West Berkeley and whose nickname is "Little Speedy," has been arrested for assaulting a police officer, attempted murder, vehicle theft, resisting arrest and drug possession.

"(Griffin) is called 'Little Speedy' in Berkeley by Berkeley Police Department officers and apparently gives false information when stopped, then takes off fast," according to a probation report filed in court.

In 1989, Griffin was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to five years in state prison for stealing money from a Berkeley man. One of Griffin's accomplices allegedly shot the man in the shoulder during the robbery, according to court records.

Griffin also had a juvenile arrest record, escaped from a summer camp for delinquents and "has a history of violence and brandishing weapons," according to the court records.

He has been involved in numerous altercations with police in several East Bay cities, usually because he tried to flee when being questioned by officers, according to the records.

In one case in 1985, an Albany police officer swung his baton at Griffin while trying to stop him, accidentally hitting Griffin on the head and sending him to the hospital.

— Tribune staff writers Paul Grabowicz and Harry Harris contributed to this report.

'I'm an easy target,' cleared Berkeley cop says

SAT MAY 23 1992

By Paul Grabowicz and Harry Harris
Tribune staff writer

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When Berkeley police officer Michael Cefalu saw the videotape of the Rodney King beating, he said he was appalled.

"It appeared to me to be a blatant act of misuse of police force," Cefalu said. "I was upset as a police officer because I knew it would affect my job" by increasing public distrust.

Cefalu's prediction would come true, but in a way that he could not have imagined.

A week and a half after four Los Angeles officers were acquitted of beating King, Cefalu found himself the target of a sensational charge that he was one of four white Berkeley officers who beat a black Richmond man, Ronald Lee Griffin.

Now, Cefalu and the three other Berkeley officers have been cleared and Griffin is

in jail.

But for 12 long days before investigators discounted Griffin's claims, Cefalu was a lightning rod for rage over police brutality. His history of excessive-force complaints in Berkeley and previously as an Oakland officer became front-page news.

"As the media began spreading my name around, I was devastated," Cefalu said yesterday in his first interview since

Griffin made the beating claim May 12. "It was emotionally traumatizing to sit at home and see my name and my picture.... I was on CNN.

"When it became apparent close friends

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of mine had a question in their mind — that's when it was most upsetting to me. Anyone who knows me and knows what kind of police officer I am, knows I could not do something like that."

Even though police now say Griffin invented the brutality story to cover up his involvement in a savage crime spree, a cloud still hangs over Cefalu.

His hiring by Berkeley police is being probed by the city's Police Review Commission, and civil rights attorneys contend he is unfit to be a cop.

"I've been vindicated in the Griffin accusations, but I have not had my say and been heard until now about the accusations in my past," he said.

Cefalu acknowledges he is an aggressive officer, but not brutal.

"As a cop you have to be tough, but that doesn't mean you have to use excessive force or be discourteous."

Cefalu said he needs to be aggressive to deal with the drug dealers, robbers and murderers who terrorize the streets he patrols in southwest Berkeley.

"I'm not out there looking for someone who ran a stop sign. My car will be parked one place and I'll be two blocks away hiding behind some bushes waiting for a fugitive or watching for a drug dealer to step out."

It is those criminals, Cefalu said, who have made the bulk of the complaints against him.

"I don't want to sound like a crybaby, (and) I don't think I'm being targeted" for brutality complaints, said Cefalu, who is soft-spoken with a boyish face.

"I just think I'm an easy target. People don't like to go to jail, and often they just file complaints because they're mad."

Dreams of serving

Cefalu said he will not change his intense approach to policing because of the complaints.

He acknowledged some police officers are better at "public relations," but said "my community service is not the type most people recognize."

"I'm serving the community by locking up bad guys. Making the streets safer is my community service."

Cefalu was raised in a middle-class peninsula home far from the crime-ridden inner-city streets. He decided to become a police officer because he "went on a ride-along (with officers) when I was 13 years old and I fell in love with it."

In 1985, at the age of 21, Cefalu was hired by the Oakland Police Department. He said he decided to join an urban force because he believed that was where he could do the most good.

"The inner cities allow me to do good for

some of the people that are really suffering from serious crime problems. I can have an effect as an individual on these people's lives."

When he joined the force, Cefalu was an accomplished amateur boxer and often trained at Oakland gyms. It was that fighter image he believes that first prompted brutality complaints by criminals who knew he would not back down from them.

"When they see me ... they know they can't intimidate me, that I'll chase them down."

Several force complaints

At Oakland, Cefalu was named in 14 excessive-force and three other complaints filed with the department's internal affairs division.

Cefalu insisted that was not extraordinary. "I've made thousands of arrests at the Oakland Police Department," he said, more than most officers and usually of dangerous drug dealers.

Two of the complaints were sustained. Ironically, the one excessive-force complaint that was upheld involved not a criminal, but a fellow cop.

The July 22, 1988, incident began when Cefalu was in an unmarked police car in East Oakland and an officer called in a description of a drug suspect fleeing from a bust.

Cefalu said he spotted the suspect and tried to cut off him off with his car. His car struck the suspect, but the man got up and appeared ready to flee again, Cefalu said.

"I tackled him," he said, and "slapped him on the side of the face to disorient him so I could get control" of him.

The suspect turned out to be Derrick Norfleet, an Oakland undercover drug officer.

Norfleet later sued, and a federal jury ruled Cefalu had used excessive force in hitting Norfleet with the car, but not in striking him.

Norfleet's attorneys asked for at least \$250,000 in damages. The jury awarded \$60,000.

Cefalu said he believes the publicity over the Norfleet case is what led to him becoming a target for brutality claims — half of which were filed in the five months between the Norfleet incident and Cefalu's resignation from the Oakland force.

Cefalu said he didn't quit because of the Norfleet case, and was asked to stay on in the department. But he said he wanted a break from police work to try his hand at law school.

Cefalu earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and went to law school for one year before the lure of police work drew him back. He landed a job at the Berkeley department in 1991 and returned to the streets.

He has had three internal affairs complaints in Berkeley, but the details

cleared him each time. He has received eight departmental commendations.

'Shocked and surprised'

On May 10, Cefalu reported to work as usual, but a lieutenant pulled him aside and "said I was identified as one of four officers who had essentially kidnapped and beaten Griffin." He was put on administrative leave while the case was investigated.

"I was shocked and surprised that I was getting removed from the street," he said, "but I understood it given the serious nature of the allegation."

Cefalu said he had two previous encounters with Griffin.

In March, he arrested Griffin for illegal possession of codeine pills, causing Griffin to be jailed on a parole violation.

Then on April 28, Cefalu said he found a weapon in a car Griffin had driven and filed a report that might have led to Griffin's parole being revoked again.

That incident, Cefalu theorized, was what caused Griffin to invent his story.

"He probably realized that in order to wash the (weapon) case, he would have to make those allegations" of brutality.

While police investigated Griffin's statements, Cefalu said he sat at home frustrated. "They were conducting a criminal investigation, and I couldn't call the homicide and robbery investigators and ask them, 'How's this thing coming?'"

"My only contact with the investigation was through the media," he said.

"I was really upset, but I just kept reminding myself that no one can pull this off, no one can get away with framing a cop like this," he said.

Cefalu was finally vindicated this week with Griffin's arrest and reinstated with a promotion to detective.

Ambivalent about new post

Cefalu said he has mixed emotions about his new job.

"I love the street-level law enforcement, and that's what I think I'm the best at. But unfortunately because of the political climate, I believe it's best for me to be inside."

"My ability to practice law enforcement on the street right now with these accusations has been severely hampered."

That particularly upsets Cefalu. "I had a great deal of satisfaction going into an area that's not a pleasant place to live and cleaning it up," Cefalu said.

"There are a lot of good people in southwest Berkeley, like there's a lot of good people in Oakland. I'm not so idealistic that I think I can save the city, but I can help the neighborhoods out and make it a safer place for those people."

— Tribune staff writer William Broad

Cop awarded \$60,000 for police brutality complaint

TUE AUG 27 1991

By Craig Staats
Tribune staff writer

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal court jury yesterday awarded \$60,000 in damages to a black Oakland city police officer who said he was run down and beaten by fellow officers during a drug bust gone awry.

Officer Derrick D. Norfleet, who took the stand during a five-day trial, said he hoped the decision would send a message to other people who have been mistreated by police to come forward and tell their stories.

"This kind of conduct does exist in every police

department," Norfleet said. "What they did was wrong."

One of Norfleet's attorneys, Oakland's John Burris, called the judgment "a tremendous victory."

"It was more a question of principle for him than money," Burris said.

Norfleet was working undercover in July 1988 when he was assigned to make a drug buy at a house on 96th Avenue in East Oakland.

After making the buy, Norfleet walked outside and signaled his partner, then jogged up 96th Avenue to a nearby park.

According to Norfleet, a team of city police officers followed him in a car, then jumped the curb and chased him through the park.

He said he believed the officers planned to take an arrest of him to protect his undercover identity, so he stopped and put his hands up.

However, the car — traveling at an estimated 5 to 15 mph — rammed Norfleet and the three officers — Mike Cefalou, Tim Chun and Bernard Thurman — got out and began punching, kicking and hitting him with a flashlight, according to the lawsuit.

The attack continued until they recognized

Norfleet as a fellow police officer.

The \$60,000 award was levied against Cefalou, the car's driver. The jury awarded no punitive damages and levied no damages against Chun or Thurman, Burris said.

Since the incident, Cefalou and Chun have left the police department.

Norfleet, 28, continues to work as a patrol officer, assigned to a central East Oakland beat that stretches from Fruitvale Avenue to 73rd Avenue.

Lawyers in the city attorney's office did not return telephone calls yesterday to comment.